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From: Anne Forbes
Sent: Saturday, October 29, 2005 9:25 PM
To: Conservation Commission; East Acton Village Planning Committee; Historic District Commission; Land Stewardship Committee; Natural Resources Department; Morrison Committee; Open Space and Recreation Committee; Planning Board
Cc: Historical Commission; Susan Mitchell-Hardt; Mary Ann Ashton
Subject: Heritage Landscape Inventory Program discussion 11/1, 9:05, Room 204

At their meeting on Tuesday, Nov. 1 at 9:05, the Selectmen will be discussing whether to authorize Acton's participation in the **Heritage Landscape Inventory Program**.

This state-funded program represents a unique opportunity for Acton residents to identify and contribute to the future protection of landscapes that make our community unique. This remarkable program has been in place under the Mass. Dept. of Conservation & Recreation for the past few years. Its intention is to raise public awareness at the local, regional, and state levels about landscape preservation; and to encourage coordination among boards and interest groups within a community, as well as among local governments, regional organizations, state agencies and non-profit groups in dealing with heritage landscapes. It also provides strategies and assistance for the protection of those landscapes.

Over the past few years I have become familiar with the pilot project conducted by the DCR in southeastern Mass., where the methodology for documenting Massachusetts' heritage landscapes was developed, as well as with their first full regional project conducted last year in Essex County, which was done in partnership with the Essex Heritage Area.

Last spring I attended the follow-up regional meeting held for the 20+ communities who took part in the Essex Heritage Area project, and I was greatly impressed by the enthusiasm of the local folks who had participated. They were clearly energized by the landscape preservation tools that they had acquired, highly focused on where they wanted to go with the results of their heritage landscape inventories, and eager to capitalize on the help offered by DCR as a state agency and Essex Heritage as a non-profit in preserving some well-loved parts of their communities.

For 2006, DCR has partnered with the non-profit Freedom's Way Heritage Association to bring the program to the 37 Massachusetts communities in the Freedom's Way area, which includes Acton. If we choose to participate, Acton will receive free technical assistance from a team of professional consultants, from staff members of the Dept. of Conservation and Recreation and from volunteers from Freedom's Way.

If Acton takes part in the program, we will:

- Participate in a project kick-off meeting with all participating communities;
- Host a meeting to solicit input from the public about heritage landscapes in Acton;
- Host a half-day of fieldwork by the professional consulting team assigned to the project;
- Gain a greater understanding of Acton's heritage landscapes through the "reconnaissance survey" process, which generates a list of significant heritage landscapes in the community;
- Receive a reconnaissance survey report providing summary information about Acton's landscape development, highlight particularly significant resources, and provide general recommendations about pertinent preservation strategies;
- Prioritize recommendations and establish a plan for action.

In addition, especially since some of our most prized agricultural landscapes cross boundaries into other towns, it is likely that the broad "reconnaissance" survey of our heritage landscapes will be augmented by some intensive survey on Mass. Historical Commission inventory forms. As you may know, through our local Historical Commission Acton will soon be utilizing CPA funds to hire a consultant to produce a large number of new MHC historic properties inventory forms. However, it is not likely that the budget for that project is large enough to include many historic landscapes. In any case, a single community's Cultural Resources/Historic Properties Survey scope is not usually designed to include corridors or landscapes that extend into other towns. The

products of the Heritage Landscape Inventory Program are entirely complementary to the local surveys, and should even free up some of the local survey budget to be applied to other types of properties.

In order to take advantage of the Heritage Landscape Inventory Program, Acton must submit a one-page application to the DCR by November 21st, along with letters of support from the Selectmen and other interested groups. It would be great if interested town board members and other local residents could attend the Selectmen's discussion on Tuesday.

For more information, and to view examples of the work accomplished under the program so far, please visit the DCR website at <http://www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/histland/histland.htm>.

Anne Forbes